

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

BENJI TAKAHASHI

August 19, 1993
Loomis, California

By Mark Nakagawa
Florin Japanese American Citizens League
and Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, California



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

FLORIN CHAPTER • PO Box • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95829-2634

PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW HISTORY	i
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY	ii
SESSION 1, August 19, 1993	
[Tape 1, Side 1]	1
Parents--Childhood--Entrance examination--Arrival in America-- Uncle's store in Loomis--Use of Spanish language--Secretary for the Japanese Association--Loomis a Christian town--Japanese organized land companies--Loomis Methodist Church.	
[Tape 1, Side 2]	14
Christian experience in Japan--baptized at Pine Methodist Church-- Marriage--Children--Beginning of World War II--Reaction of customers-- Evacuation to Marysville Assembly Center--Moved to Tule Lake--Moved to Amache--Return to Loomis--Reopening of store--Prediction of Dr. Smith in summer of 1941--Gratitude to be a Christian.	

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Mark Nakagawa, Florin JACL member, served the Sacramento United Methodist Church for many years and in 1994 was assigned as the Senior Pastor at the West Los Angeles United Methodist Church with a predominantly Japanese American congregation.

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

August 19, 1993
6264 Horseshoe Bar Road
Loomis CA 95650

TRANSCRIBING

Joanne Iritani, Florin JACL member, Education Chair, and retired special education teacher with a master's degree from California State University, Bakersfield.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Pictures were reproduced by Dan Inouye, Florin JACL member.

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the tapes will be kept by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives at the Library, California State University, Sacramento, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Benji Takahashi was born In Matsui, Wakayama, Japan on February 6, 1898. His parents, Kiyomatsu and Tsuneno Takahashi were farmers. After completing high school at Kokawa Chugakko in 1917, he taught at this school for two years before coming to America at age 20. As the second son, he was not destined to inherit the family estate, and realizing that he needed a means to make a living, Benji Takahashi came to America with the intention of earning enough money to return to Japan in three years.

His uncle, who had come to America before 1900, had established a general merchandise store in Loomis, California. So while attending high school, Takahashi worked in the store after school and on Saturdays.

During the winter months, Benji Takahashi lived in San Francisco for a short time at the Pine Methodist Church dormitory with other young men from Japan. In 1921, he was baptized there by Dr. Johnson, superintendent of the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission program. Takahashi has been a member of the Loomis Methodist Church from 1922 to the present. During his youth in Japan, he was a member of the Nippon Christian Church from 1917 to 1918. Prior to that, the Takahashi family affiliation was the Koyasan Church.

Benji Takahashi eventually moved to Loomis to work in the Loomis Mutual Store in 1922. Because many customers spoke Spanish, he learned simple Spanish to help them. He worked at the store from 1921 until 1988.

Prior to World War II, Benji Takahashi was the secretary of the Placer Japanese Association. He worked evenings assisting the other Issei in Loomis by corresponding with the Japanese Consul-General's office and helping the other less educated men from Japan to complete legal forms.

On November 27, 1926, Benji Takahashi was married to Florence Takagishi who had been born in Loomis on December 20, 1910. Their four daughters are Nancy Tsuneko Nakajima born February 17, 1929, Martha Sanaye Kitajima born April 7, 1934, Naomi Goto born March 5, 1937, and Hannah Kazuko Mizuno born August 31, 1938.

Following the beginning of World War II on December 7, 1941, Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. The Takahashi family and all people of Japanese ancestry were forcibly removed from the West Coast military zone to internment camps. The Takahashis went to Marysville, California Assembly Center for six months in 1942, were transferred to Tule Lake, California Relocation Center, and then to Amache, Colorado Relocation Center. They returned to Loomis in March 1945, and reopened the store in September 1945.

Benji Takahashi was among the five oldest people in the Sacramento area to receive redress checks and a presidential apology during the 1990 ceremony at the Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church. The check and letters of apology signed by President Bush were given to all those affected by Executive Order 9066.

Benji Takahashi authored Book of Japanese Proverbs in 1987, History of Loomis Mutual Store (unpublished) in 1989, and his Autobiography in 1977. His special interests include fishing, Haiku Poetry Club, and the Bonsai Club.

Benji Takahashi has lived a long and fruitful life.

[Italics are used in this transcription to indicate use of the Japanese language.]

[Session 1, August 19, 1993]

[Tape 1, Side 1]

NAKAGAWA: This tape recording is being made for the Florin Japanese American Citizens League Oral History Project. The interviewer is Mark Nakagawa, one of the interviewers for the Florin JACL Oral History Project. The date is Thursday evening, August 19th, 1993, approximate time is 7:20 p.m. We will be interviewing Mr. Benji Takahashi of 6264 Horseshoe Bar Road, Loomis, California 95650. Mr. Takahashi is an Issei, and he will be the primary interviewee of this interview. Assisting him will be his wife, Mrs. Florence Teruko Takahashi who will also add to the interview when she feels comfortable. Sitting in on tonight's interview is Mrs. Naomi Goto, who is Mr. and Mrs. Takahashi's daughter, and Courtney Goto, who is Naomi's daughter as well as the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Takahashi. We will stop the tape at this point to take a sound check.

[Interruption]

NAKAGAWA: Mr. Takahashi, what is your birthdate? When were you born?

TAKAHASHI: I born in February 6, 1898.

NAKAGAWA: In Japan?

TAKAHASHI: In Japan.

NAKAGAWA: What ken?

TAKAHASHI: Wakayama Ken.

NAKAGAWA: What were your parents' names?

TAKAHASHI: Pardon?

F TAKAHASHI: *Papa ya Mama no namae wa nan desuka?* (What were your father and mother's names?)

TAKAHASHI: My father?

NAKAGAWA: *Namae wa nan desuka?* (What was his name?)

TAKAHASHI: Takahashi Kiyomatsu.

NAKAGAWA: Kiyomatsu.

TAKAHASHI: Yes. *Haha no namae wa Takahashi Tsuneno.* (My mother's name was Takahashi Tsuneno.)

NAKAGAWA: How old were you when you came to America?

TAKAHASHI: I was twenty. . .just about twenty two year old.

NAKAGAWA: So you lived in Japan a long time, then, before you came to America?

TAKAHASHI: I finish five year high school in Japan. And came here with a passport of a student. Otherwise, they stop immigrant from orient.

NAKAGAWA: What are some of the things you remember about growing up in Japan? Some things.

TAKAHASHI: Something I remember?

NAKAGAWA: *Nihon de.* (In Japan.) *Mukashi kara.* (From long ago.)

TAKAHASHI: Japan. Something I. . . Entrance examination to higher school was very difficult, by ratio about 1 from 7 or 10, like that. Like [inaudible] School, more to do. They call them *shiken jigoku*.. Hell of examination.

NAKAGAWA: [Laughter]

TAKAHASHI: Ya, and I wasn't very bright, so I intended to get out of Japan because I have (was the) second son. Japan has a custom, first son take over family's estate, see. I have to make my living, so I found a way. In Japan, I have no way to make a living, so I tried to come America and that day a discount to come to get a passport.

NAKAGAWA: We're going to stop at this point to make sure that we're picking up Mr. Takahashi okay. So we're going to take a sound check right now.

[Interruption]

NAKAGAWA: The sound check has been completed, and we are now back to the interview.

Mr. Takahashi, when you came to America, how did your parents feel about that? Did they want you to come to America, or did they want you to stay in Japan?

- TAKAHASHI: At first I was staying about three year and going back to Japan, but I decided not going back to Japan. And my uncle had a store in town, and I helped him after school and Saturday like that. I went high school about [inaudible] years, but it's very hard for me to follow other Caucasian students. I quit. And that time, what you call racial hate and even college graduate didn't have any job. Only he can do is work in fruit stand or. . . .
- NAKAGAWA: Mr. Takahashi. When you came to America, what port did you come in to? San Francisco? Seattle?
- TAKAHASHI: I came to San Francisco.
- NAKAGAWA: San Francisco. Okay. And then did you stay in San Francisco for a little while, or did you come to Placer right away?
- TAKAHASHI: Well, I stay San Francisco, that's winter time. And summer time store get busy, so summer time I come back to Loomis and stay in Sacramento, and stay in Pine Methodist. And they have many young Japanese stay over there.
- NAKAGAWA: At that time was the church called Pine Methodist, or was it Fukuin Kai?
- TAKAHASHI: Pine. They have old church on Pine Street. Basement use for chapel, upstairs for dormitory. And all the young men from Japan they stay there. And they find all kind of part time job or schoolboy, like that.
- NAKAGAWA: Did you ever meet Kanichi Miyama?
- TAKAHASHI: Huh?

- NAKAGAWA: Did you ever meet a man named Kanichi Miyama?
- TAKAHASHI: Huh, huh?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Kanichi Miyama te yuu hito atta koto arimasu ka te.* (Did you meet a man named Kanichi Miyama?)
- TAKAHASHI: Kanichi Miyama? No.
- NAKAGAWA: Kanichi Miyama was. . .
- TAKAHASHI: I knew one young man from Florin, Ouchida.
- NAKAGAWA: Ouchida?
- TAKAHASHI: Ya. Ouchida.
- NAKAGAWA: What was his first name?
- TAKAHASHI: That was only young man I remember. Ouchida.
- NAKAGAWA: Was his first name Harold?
- TAKAHASHI: I didn't ask him.
- NAKAGAWA: Did he run a fruit stand? In Florin?
- TAKAHASHI: I don't know what became of him. I didn't stay in San Francisco very long.
- NAKAGAWA: Oh, this was San Francisco.
- TAKAHASHI: Yes, San Francisco.
- NAKAGAWA: Okay. Your uncle had a store in Placer?
- TAKAHASHI: My uncle had a store in Loomis.
- NAKAGAWA: In Loomis. When did he come to the United States?
- TAKAHASHI: Who?
- NAKAGAWA: Your uncle.
- TAKAHASHI: Oh, he came in America before 1900.

NAKAGAWA: What kind of store did he have?

TAKAHASHI: They have a general merchandise there.

NAKAGAWA: Who were his customers? Only other Isseis, or even other people also?

TAKAHASHI: Well, the beginning, Japanese for Japanese, but eventually, time I came many Spanish immigrant. They came to America through Hawaii. And they living in the next town Rocklin. And they all come to Loomis and trade, because there were kind of racial hate or something like that besides handicap of language. And we learned very simple Spanish and talked to them, you see. And they come to shopping in Loomis on horse and buggy, and they buy flour and beans like that. So even in we bought a regular old Studebaker and delivery at night, like that. So people call our store "Spanish Store." That's the reason I started learning Spanish. I still remember a few common Spanish. Spanish people were very temper people. They get mad easy. But very friendly.

NAKAGAWA: What kind of work did the Spanish people do?

TAKAHASHI: There is a big nursery over there, between Loomis and Rocklin called California Nursery, and they worked for that nursery. Just common labor.

NAKAGAWA: What about the other Isseis who lived in Loomis? Did they also work at the nursery?

F TAKAHASHI: *Issei ga nursery ni hataraki mashita ka te. Issei ga.* Did the Issei work in the nursery? The Issei?

TAKAHASHI: No. They didn't know Issei. . . . Oh, there is one family was working at the nursery, as foreman. The family still live here.

NAKAGAWA: Okay. But at that time, were there a lot of them?

TAKAHASHI: Most of. . . Placer County, Loomis tend to work on the fruit orchard. And most of Japanese farmer's helper. Very few people own land, you know. Loomis very fortunately was a Christian town. And Reverend Yoshida, he come to Loomis and he started Loomis Church. But my wife's grandparents, Omachi, they're old family. She was born in Loomis.

NAKAGAWA: We're going to stop right now and take another sound check.

[Interruption]

We've just completed the sound check and we are now continuing the interview with Mr. Benji Takahashi along with his wife Florence Teruko Takahashi.

Mr. Takahashi, how long did you work at your uncle's store?

TAKAHASHI: How long?

NAKAGAWA: How many years? Or how many months?

TAKAHASHI: Well, I'm sorry, I started working at the store as a regular clerk 1922. 1988 we closed the store.

NAKAGAWA: Okay. That's a long time. [Laughter] During that same time, you were very active helping other Issei in the community, right?

- TAKAHASHI: That time, I was a very. . . what I say, a very important man, because most Issei come here as laborer, and some people they never have go to school. Sometime, they call me Ben, Ben, you know. And one of my good friend, he didn't have education. He call me "Benjo, Benjo" (*Benjo* is the old term for toilet) [Laughter] I didn't correct him, because I embarrass him.
- NAKAGAWA: [Laughter] But he embarrass you by calling you Benjo.
- TAKAHASHI: One time I learned when they have many Spanish trade. They buy big sack of flour and garbanzo beans and codfish. That's their main food.
- NAKAGAWA: You know, the Spanish people. Why did they come to your store? Why didn't they go to the *Hakujin* (Caucasian) store?
- TAKAHASHI: Well, many time, one thing they have a handicap. They don't understand English, and we speak Spanish. And another, same time they think they are white, and they look us down, I think.
- NAKAGAWA: Who did?
- TAKAHASHI: Yea. And those people must be very low class people because they come to store with baby. I asked, "*Quanto dias?*" (How many days?) "*Cinco dias.*" (Five days.) Five day old baby they carry and come to store. And she pick up sweet potato and pick end, and she chew on like that. She can't do that in other Caucasian store. And they're so friendly, and

some customer come in and say, "*Como esta feo?*" "How are you ugly man?" "*Muy esta bien.*" [Laughter] That's the way we made business with Spanish people.

F TAKAHASHI: *Indo jin mo atta desho?* (You also had customers who were from India, didn't you?)

TAKAHASHI: Some were Hindu trader, too. Hindu trader, they want whole wheat flour and butter. They call butter, call "Peko". And they make pancakes with butter, and they have mungo beans. You know *moyashi*? *Moyashi*? Bean Sprouts? That's green beans they cook up and they fold up in bread. They don't use knife and fork, you know. They use like that.

NAKAGAWA: Mr. Takahashi, you had education before you came here, but other Isseis who came did not have as much education as you did, right?

F TAKAHASHI: *Papa wa education ga aru. Hoka no hito wa anmari education ga nakatta no desho?* (You were educated. The other people did not have much education, did they?)

TAKAHASHI: Other *hito*? (Other people?)

F TAKAHASHI: *Hoka no Issei no hito wa.* (The other Issei.)

TAKAHASHI: Some Issei, even I signed on. . .

NAKAGAWA: Did they come to you for help?

TAKAHASHI: Ya, they come. The laborers.

F TAKAHASHI: *Papa ga sono hito no help shimashita ka, te?* (He is asking did you help the other people?)

TAKAHASHI: Huh?

F TAKAHASHI: *Sono hito wo help shimashita ka, te?* (Did you help the other people?)

TAKAHASHI: Oh, I was a very handy man there. That time there was a Japanese Association. One in Seattle Japanese Association, and New York. But Loomis was a Christian town separated from *Bukkyo Kai*. (the Buddhist Church). So in a small community. . . Loomis I think about thirty families, and we had a Japanese Association. *Nihonjin Kai*. I help, I do as secretary work, correspondence with the Consul-General, like that. That day, I was a very useful man among the Japanese. Old Japan saying, "*Torinashi, sato no komori.*" *Wakari masuka?* (Do you understand?) (The proverb has been translated by Mr. Takahashi as, "In a country where there are no birds, even bats are appreciated.")

NAKAGAWA: *Sukoshi. Yakushi kudasai.* (A little. Please translate it.)

TAKAHASHI: Translate, without *dojo*, even that is very. . .

NAKAGAWA: Christian?

TAKAHASHI: It has a very Christian thing. "*Torinashi, sato no komori.*" I help the store in daytime, and at nighttime, I help the Japanese Association, secretary work. People want to go to Japan, and they want to come back, and you have to applicate for the interview certificate, see. That was quite a few job, but most evening I work for, until 1924.

NAKAGAWA: We're going to stop at this point and take another sound check.

TAKAHASHI: 1924, they stop everything.

[Interruption]

NAKAGAWA: We have taken the sound check and we will continue the interview now. Mr. Takahashi, why is 1924 so important? What happened in 1924?

TAKAHASHI: They start picture bride, too. You know Japanese young men, they send picture to Japan and get bride for picture bride. They stopped in 1924.

NAKAGAWA: 1924, also after that time, there were certain laws by the government, right? Japanese could not. . . Isseis could not buy land. Isseis could not do other things after 1924.

F TAKAHASHI: *1924 no aida ni wa Issei wa hatake nanka kae nakatta mono atta desho.* (Around 1924, wasn't there something that prevented Issei from buying land?)

TAKAHASHI: Well, around 1920, they could use. . . they organized land company. And American born as president, and Japanese as shareholders, they organized land company. Most of the Loomis Japanese they bought land that way. So in probability, more land owners than any other place.

NAKAGAWA: More Japanese land owner? *Nihonjin* no land owner?

F TAKAHASHI: *Nihonjin no land owner no hoo ga ookatta no desho ka?* (Weren't there more Japanese land owners than any others?)

TAKAHASHI: Yes, that day most of the people bought ranch, and very few white *Hakujin* ranch owner.

NAKAGAWA: Hmm. Okay. We're going to stop for a few moments here.

[Interruption]

NAKAGAWA: Okay we are back and we will continue the interview.

Mr. Takahashi, you have mentioned the Methodist Church several times. How important was the Methodist Church in your life?

F TAKAHASHI: Methodist Church *no koto ga sensei ni papa ga yui mashita te. Da kara*, how important *kyokai ga deshita ka te?* (You mentioned the Methodist Church. So how important was the church?)

TAKAHASHI: I am very thankful for came to Loomis because the only place I know was the church.

NAKAGAWA: You mentioned Reverend Tsuda.

TAKAHASHI: I don't know. That was before my time. The time I came, there was no minister for a few years. And Reverend Baba came. You heard that name? He was from. . . he was a samurai minister. He was a samurai. The church didn't have. . . the time I came they have a horse and buggy for minister to use, to do visitation in horse and buggy. Soon the church bought a car.

NAKAGAWA: Who came after Reverend Baba. *Baba bokushi san no ato de, dare desuka?* (Who followed Reverend Baba?)

- F TAKAHASHI: *Baba sensei no ato wa dare datta ka te?* (He asked, who followed Reverend Baba.)
- TAKAHASHI: *Bokushisan no uchi ni wa dare datta.* . . (Among the ministers who was it?)
- F TAKAHASHI: *Fujii? Fujii bokushi?* (Reverend Fujii?)
- TAKAHASHI: Fujii bokushi wa before Baba san? Isn't it?
- NAKAGAWA: What about Kuwano?
- F TAKAHASHI: Kuwano san? Kuwano san is much later.
- TAKAHASHI: Huh?
- F TAKAHASHI: Kuwano sensei.
- TAKAHASHI: Kuwano san was much later.
- NAKAGAWA: I notice Loomis Church has a building Kuwano Hall.
- TAKAHASHI: Loomis new church was 1960, around 2 or 3. And Reverend Sano was there. But he didn't finish the job and he left.
- NAKAGAWA: Now in Japan, were you a Christian?
- TAKAHASHI: Yes.
- NAKAGAWA: Oh you were?
- TAKAHASHI: Yes, I was. Not with, I'm not baptised, but we went to fellowship because. . . . My schoolmate went to Full Gospel Church, and they have evening service and I went there. And another thing, we boys went there because the church have young girls there, so we went to see girls.
- NAKAGAWA: [Laughter] I would have thought so. Well we're running out of tape on this side, so we're going to stop and change the tape.

[End Tape 1, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

NAKAGAWA: This is Side 2 of the Interview with Mr. Benji Takahashi on behalf of the Florin JACL Oral History Project, and the date is August 19, 1993. The interviewer is Mark Nakagawa. Also sitting in and assisting on this interview is Mrs. Florence Teruko Takahashi, Benji Takahashi's wife. And also sitting in on the interview is Mrs. Naomi Goto, daughter of the Takahashis and Courtney Goto who is daughter of Naomi and granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Takahashi. We are in the residence of the Takahashis, 6264 Horseshoe Bar Road, Loomis, California, 95650. The time is approximately 8:00 p.m. and we are now continuing the interview. Why don't you ask him.

F TAKAHASHI: *Yu te mi te. Kondo yui na sai. Kondo hanashi shite chodai te.*
(Please tell him about it.)

TAKAHASHI: *Nan no hanashi?* (Tell about what?)

F TAKAHASHI: *Kyokai doshite itta no to.* (Why you went to church.)

TAKAHASHI: *Doko no kyokai?* (Which church?)

F TAKAHASHI: *Nihon de.* (In Japan.)

TAKAHASHI: *Nihon de wa,* (in Japan) I lived in a country village. In the evening a group of boys and girls were playing, and one group came from the next town. A team, I think. A team. And they had lanterns and so we called them, "*Yaso ga kita. Yaso ga kita.*" (The Christians have come. The Christians have come.)

TAKAHASHI: They called Christians "Yaso". They got the children and gave some kind of story. And right away I kind of have a [inaudible]. Another thing, my uncle come home from America and stay with us and he was always singing some [inaudible] things and he was so happy. So Christians were very happy people. And I was always interested in become Christian. During I stay in Pine Methodist, I baptize from Dr. Johnson at Pine Methodist.

NAKAGAWA: Wow! That's interesting. I think that's amazing.

TAKAHASHI: That's about 1921, I think, around there. 1921.

NAKAGAWA: Mr. Takahashi, how did you meet your wife? At church?

TAKAHASHI: Church? Oh. That day so many young men and few girls. And in Japan say, "One girl and seven boys" like that. Anyway I think I was a very honest, religious boy, that's why I think my friend was a *baishakunin* (matchmaker) and then we got married in 1926. So I was a good boy, I think. [Laughter]

NAKAGAWA: [Laughter] Mrs. Takahashi, is that true?

TAKAHASHI: I'm glad I came to Loomis because most young men that went to other town, some of them going saloon and gambling joint, and most of them didn't make marriage. I thank this one. Loomis is just like Garden of Eden.

[Telephone ringing]

We will stop for a minute as we answer the telephone.

[Interruption]

We will now continue the interview with Mr. Benji Takahashi.
 Mr. Takahashi, your wedding. . . *Kekkon shiki no toki ni wa,*
bokushi san dare deshita ka? (Who was the minister at your
 wedding)?

F TAKAHASHI: Yoshioka.

TAKAHASHI: Reverend Yoshioka.

NAKAGAWA: And where was the wedding held at? The Loomis Church?
Kekkon shiki wa doko datta ka? Kyokai deshita ka?

F TAKAHASHI: *Kyokai deshita desho?* (It was the church, wasn't it?)

TAKAHASHI: Reverend was at the church.

NAKAGAWA: Reverend Yoshioka officiated?

TAKAHASHI: Reverend Yoshioka, yes.

NAKAGAWA: And what year was that? What was the date of your wedding?

F TAKAHASHI: November datta. 27th, 1926.

TAKAHASHI: November 27, 1926. 1926. Long before you were born.

NAKAGAWA: [Laughter] Right. That's right. When was your first child born?

TAKAHASHI: Nancy was born in '29.

NAKAGAWA: *Sono tsugi wa?* Who was next?

TAKAHASHI: Next wa 1934 ni. . .

F TAKAHASHI: Martha.

TAKAHASHI: Martha. [Inaudible] And fourth one was 19. . .

F TAKAHASHI: Naomi.

NAKAGAWA: *Naomi san wa nan nen desuka?* (What year was Naomi
 born?)

- TAKAHASHI: The third one was. . .
- NAKAGAWA: What year?
- TAKAHASHI: Naomi was born '37 around there, I think. I got four daughter.
The fourth one, she died young.
- NAKAGAWA: During that. . . *Ano toki ni wa mada mise de hataraki mashita ka?* During that time, all that time, he was still working at the store?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Store de zutto hataraita ka te?*
- TAKAHASHI: My uncle died in 1929, and my brother-in-law who was married to my sister, he wasn't my cousin then. He died just before we go to camp. And he died in Sacramento hospital. And we were in Assembly Center in Marysville then.
- NAKAGAWA: Let's talk about Pearl Harbor a little bit, because you mentioned camp. Do you remember the day Pearl Harbor. . . what happened in Loomis?
- TAKAHASHI: Well, that was Sunday morning and we were driving away and they say Japan attacked Hawaii. We don't believe it.
[Inaudible] that was Sunday morning.
- NAKAGAWA: When did you believe it?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Sore ga hontoo datta te wakatta desuka te?* (When did you believe it was true?)
- TAKAHASHI: Oh, just a few days later.
- NAKAGAWA: Were you scared?

TAKAHASHI: We didn't feel very much. And the next day some of my good Caucasian customer say, "I am not come to store anymore." And come to store and no one come. And we have day before evacuation, we do business and [inaudible] the window and went to jump. One of the Caucasian customer he say, "I take care of your store", so we trust him and give him the key to him when we went to Marysville Assembly Center and stay one year. . . no, not year, about six months in Assembly, and move to Tule Lake, and next year move to Amache, Colorado camp. And we stayed there until 1945, come home, and we re-opened the store.

NAKAGAWA: When you came back, your store was okay?

TAKAHASHI: Well, my friend take care, board up the store window. But in camp they have a co-op store, so hurry and move all our merchandise to camp and we sold to co-op store in camp. We sold most of merchandise. I noticed some of clothing was missing on the way.

NAKAGAWA: But when you came back after the war. . .

TAKAHASHI: A little while they didn't come, but gradually they come back. But when we came back Loomis, one of. . . a school teacher tell us, "Don't come to town. You stay in the country for a while." About six months we didn't open store. Some Caucasian people very helpful.

NAKAGAWA: Did any of them try to hurt you?

F TAKAHASHI: *Kega saserareta ka te? Kega shimashita ka te?* (Did you get hurt?)

TAKAHASHI: Oh, no. They didn't bother us at all. They just don't talk to us.

NAKAGAWA: What happened to your house during the war?

TAKAHASHI: My house was. . . there's a Caucasian friend lived there. We had a rent. Nothing wrong with. . . the house was saved.

NAKAGAWA: So when the war ended, your family was in Amache?

F TAKAHASHI: *Amache ni otta. Senso sunda toki wa Amache ni otte.* (We were in Amache. When the war ended, you were in Amache?)

TAKAHASHI: *Nan no toki?* (when?)

F TAKAHASHI: *Senso sunda toki wa ne, Amache ni orimashita ka te?* (When the war ended were we in Amache?)

TAKAHASHI: Yes, yes, *Amache ni otte*. And government they opened California for Japanese in January. I see one family in Auburn, they first one to come back in January.

NAKAGAWA: To Auburn.

TAKAHASHI: Yes. They had a very hard time. We come back in March. We stay out in ranch and open store about September.

NAKAGAWA: So that's 1946.

TAKAHASHI: 19, what year was it?

NAOMIGOTO: '45.

NAKAGAWA: Was that '45?

TAKAHASHI: '45. 1945. September we opened. We come home in March. Almost six months we out in the ranch.

- NAKAGAWA: So after Pearl Harbor everybody from Loomis went to Marysville first?
- TAKAHASHI: Yes, and most of them come back because they have a ranch.
- NAKAGAWA: And from Marysville everyone went to Tule Lake? And then when they had the trouble there, they divided up.
- TAKAHASHI: Some Caucasians, they stay in the ranch, and they get [inaudible] without pay. That's the way they saved the ranch.
- NAKAGAWA: We're going to stop for one moment to check the sound.
- [Interruption]
- NAKAGAWA: We are now continuing the interview with Mr. Benji Takahashi. Mr. Takahashi, after the war *senso no ato de* when you came back to Loomis, how easy was it to get started again. *Kantan desuka? Muzukashii desuka? Senso no ato de.* (Was it easy? Was it difficult? After the war.)
- F TAKAHASHI: *Senso no ato de, store no akeru no ga muzukashi katta ka te? Sore tomo [inaudible]* (After the war, was it difficult to open the store?)
- TAKAHASHI: I didn't have any trouble. But for a while, a few people were against, and they have in entrance of store they have, "No Japs allowed" like that sign, few sign. But didn't have any trouble.
- NAKAGAWA: You know, I want to ask a question about the war. I'm going to ask anyway. During the war, Mr. Takahashi, were you angry at Japan for the war? Or were you angry at America?

TAKAHASHI: Well, my brother-in-law. . . in 1941, Dr. (Frank Herron) Smith, who was Superintendent of Methodist (the Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference), we have one summer session in American River. And we have a picnic like that. He told that Japan and America gonna fight for sure. So, if we want to go to Japan, then go home now, he said. So that's the kind of [inaudible] off. Dr. Smith was predicting the war is coming. That's 1941, summer. December, they have Pearl Harbor, that time. '41 no December, *ne?* (Right?) '42 we all went to camp. My brother-in-law said, "Dr. Smith said, if you want to go back to Japan, go home now." But my brother-in-law said, "No matter which country wins, we have hard time, so we're going to stay here." So, we didn't go back. Some have special boat to Japan, and some people went back. But not from Loomis. Nobody go back from Loomis.

NAKAGAWA: So everybody from Loomis stayed in America.

TAKAHASHI: Yes, yes.

NAKAGAWA: Wow! When you were evacuated, when you went to Marysville, Dr. Smith, was he helpful? Did Dr. Smith help a lot of Japanese when you went to camp?

TAKAHASHI: You mean assembly camp? Marysville, that was just temporary. We only stayed about five months, that's all.

F TAKAHASHI: *Dr. Smith ga ne, minna ni help shimashita ka te?* (Did Dr. Smith help everyone?)

TAKAHASHI: I don't remember.

NAKAGAWA: Dr. Smith spoke very good Japanese, didn't he? *Smith bokushi san wa Nihongo ga jozu deshita ka?* (Did Dr. Smith speak very good Japanese?)

TAKAHASHI: We don't know about Dr. Smith,. huh?

F TAKAHASHI: Yes, *nihongo yui mashi ta desho?* (He spoke in Japanese, didn't he?)

TAKAHASHI: I guess so, but you didn't know about it, huh? I don't remember.

NAKAGAWA: I'm going to talk a little bit about the more present day. Mr. Takahashi, in 1989, you came to the Methodist Church in Sacramento for the celebration for the redress, you remember that?

F TAKAHASHI: *Redress no koto.* (About redress.)

TAKAHASHI: Oh, redress, yes. About five people were oldest ones that time.

NAKAGAWA: And you all sat in the front row.

TAKAHASHI: Yes. You was there?

NAKAGAWA: I was there. I took your pictures. At that time, how did you feel about the United States government giving you money? Were you happy, were you sad, you didn't care? How did you feel? Did you think it was too late?

TAKAHASHI: Well, I'm glad to have a money.

NAKAGAWA: That's true. Twenty thousand dollars, did you think that was enough for the government to give you?

- TAKAHASHI: Ya, twenty thousand. We both twenty thousand each.
- NAKAGAWA: Is that okay? Or do you think it should be more or less?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Donna ni omotta ka, te kiiteru no.* (What did you think of it, is what he is asking.)
- TAKAHASHI: Well, we're kinda thankful to JACL. If we don't have a JACL, we didn't get the redress money. So I'm 100% supporting the JACL. We're minority, we need some kind of representative.
- NAKAGAWA: We're going to stop, because of sound check.
- [Interruption]
- NAKAGAWA: Mr. Takahashi, we're going to start to conclude this interview. This has been very, very inspiring to me, as well as very interesting. I want to ask you as you look back on your life, what are some of the things that you are thankful for?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Papa ga nani ga thankful ka kiiteru no. Papa no life no aida ni wa nani ga thankful desuka te.* (He is asking what are you thankful for?)
- TAKAHASHI: *Gokuro no mono?* (Something I am thankful for?) Well, I always thankful I came to Loomis. I thought that before most young men from Japan they went to big city and no place to go, so many people they going to gambling joint and spend the day like that. But come over Loomis, it's a Christian town. They never even have a saloon in that town. They didn't have beer and wine until 1950.
- NAKAGAWA: Wow!

- TAKAHASHI: We didn't handle beer, and wine, and sake in the store.
- NAKAGAWA: Nowadays, every day, what are some of the things that you think about in your life? What are some very important things in your life that you think about?
- F TAKAHASHI: *Papa ga nani ga omotte imasu ka te?* (What do you think about?)
- TAKAHASHI: I'm very grateful I became a Christian. I landed in a nice place like Loomis here.
- F TAKAHASHI: *Nani to nani to nani ga arigatai ka te?* (What are the things you are thankful for.)
- TAKAHASHI: Every day I'm thankful for. . . I'm past ninety five now. I write a diary every day, and I joined a haiku (poetry writing). I enjoy to keep up my mind straight. I joined the bonsai club. I used to join shigin (Japanese singing requiring vocal strength). My voice is dying out now. I can't do like I used to.
- NAKAGAWA: What do you want for your birthday present when you turn one hundred?
- TAKAHASHI: What I want?
- F TAKAHASHI: *One hundred ni nattara nani birthday present ni hoshiika?*
(When you become 100, what do you want for your birthday?)
- TAKAHASHI: *Nani?* (What?)
- F TAKAHASHI: *Birthday present ni nani hoshiika?* (What present do you want?)

TAKAHASHI: I don't want anything. I have everything I want. I always say I married to a good girl.

NAKAGAWA: Okay. On that note I think we will conclude this interview. Again we have been interviewing Mr. Benji Takahashi at his residence. And we have been assisted in this interview by his wife, Florence Teruko Takahashi. The date is Thursday, August 19, 1993, and the time at the conclusion of this interview is approximately 8:40 p.m. End of interview.

[End Tape 1, Side 2]

"Like rain helps wind
we help each other
for 50 years"

By Benji Takahashi

Written on occasion of
50th wedding anniversary
Nov. 27, 1976

雨
風
も
助
け
合
ひ
ま
す
五
十
年

乙 井
3 子

"In November we have
endured good and bad
together for 60 years"

By Benji Takahashi

Written on occasion of 60th
wedding anniversary,
Nov. 27, 1986

霜月之苦樂を共に
六十年

"In autumn granddaughter
visits grandfather's birthplace"

By Benji Takahashi

Written on occasion of Courtney
Goto's visit to grandfather's
birthplace at Matsui, Wakayama,
Japan, Oct. 1992

孫娘
祖父の
母あへ
紅葉時

10-1992